

Headrick, Wanda

From: Stadler, Mark [MStadler@sdcwa.org]
Sent: Monday, January 23, 2006 3:20 PM
To: sdip_comments
Subject: deir comment letter
Attachments: sdip draft eir letter.doc

JAN 23 2006 00066

Attached is the San Diego County Water Authority's comment letter on the South Delta Improvement Program DEIR. We also are mailing a hard copy of it today to Lester Snow. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Thanks,
Mark Stadler
Principal Water Resources Specialist
San Diego County Water Authority

1/25/2006



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January 23, 2006

Mr. Lester A. Snow
Director
Department of Water Resources
P.O. Box 942836
Sacramento, CA 94236-0001

RE: South Delta Improvements Program draft EIR/EIS

Dear Lester:

I am writing on behalf of the San Diego County Water Authority in support of the South Delta Improvements Program (SDIP), which represents a responsible, balanced approach to meeting water supply and environmental needs. The Water Authority works through its member agencies to provide a safe, reliable water supply to 3 million people in the San Diego region. As the Metropolitan Water District's largest member agency, we receive a significant portion of our water from the Delta via the State Water Project (SWP). We have been involved for more than 15 years with efforts to restore the Delta as a reliable supply of high-quality water and a healthy ecosystem. We support the work of the CALFED Bay-Delta Program to accomplish these vital goals.

We support the SDIP and believe it is the right thing to do environmentally and for the state's water supply. Major benefits of the SDIP include:

- Protecting fisheries by installing a permanent operable gate that reduces the movement of juvenile salmon toward the state and federal export pumps.
- Maintaining adequate water levels and quality for agricultural diverters in the south Delta by installing three permanent operable flow control gates and dredging south Delta channels.
- Making the Bay-Delta system more flexible, increasing the quantity and reliability of average deliveries to contractors, and enabling the Department of Water Resources (DWR) to deliver additional water to its customers when the water is available and fishery protection agencies deem it safe to do so. DWR also will have the ability to shift the timing of pumping when necessary to avoid harming fish or the ecosystem.

Mr. Lester A. Snow

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Moreover, the SDIP requires no major new facilities, but rather relies on existing capacity in the state's Banks Pumping Plant. Most of the funding for the project already has been secured through voter-approved bond measures. Both of these considerations are especially important in this era of tight budgets and infrastructure challenges.

The Water Authority supports the two-stage approach outlined in the SDIP's draft environmental impact report/environmental impact statement (EIR/EIS). The first stage concerns physical and structural improvements and the second addresses the proposed operational improvements. We recognize this division as a prudent approach in that it will allow scientists to complete their investigation into the causes of falling pelagic fish populations and integrate that data into the decision-making process.

We support the identified Stage 1 preferred alternative, which calls for replacing temporary rock barriers in the South Delta with four permanent operable gates and dredging several South Delta channels. We are encouraged that DWR and the Bureau of Reclamation plan to issue a supplement to the final EIR/EIS rather than doing a lengthy, expensive separate environmental review for Stage 2.

As a regional water agency that relies heavily but not exclusively on imported water supplies, the Water Authority looks forward to working with DWR and all interests to improve the Delta as a water supply and an ecosystem. The SDIP is an important element of this effort; it is, in fact, a foundational element of the Delta Improvements Package. Delta water, delivered by the SWP, is an essential element of the diversified water supply that the Water Authority and its member agencies have developed to meet the San Diego region's needs, now and in the future. A healthy and reliable Delta system is essential to San Diego County's 3 million residents and its \$150 billion economy.

Sincerely,

Maureen A. Stapleton
General Manager

Also sent electronically to sdip_comments@water.ca.gov